

Congratulations, to our new students. I would also like to extend my congratulations to parents and others concerned.

I am very happy to be share this joy with you in person today.

Now let us think about the “timing” in which you have become undergraduate or graduate school students. What is the meaning for you, living on Earth during these times, to become university students? Disasters, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and recent earthquake, have brought chaos across the world, leaving us to acknowledge that humans do not by any means rule the Earth. The road to social globalization has been a bumpy road. Moreover, we have been exposed to the vulnerability of international order with the breakout of war led by a major power. Furthermore, digitalization and the advancement of AI technologies have led us to question the ethics of human society. Society is challenged with a time for transformation.

Against this backdrop, you are standing on the start line of a new stage in your lives. In addition to all of us at Sophia University, society gazes at you with high expectations and in support of your future. I would like you to spend your university life with the self-acknowledgement that coming to Sophia University is one of the most important decisions in your lives. Bearing a role in social transformation, you are now starting the final stage of your preparations to fulfill your social responsibilities and in turn enhancing your own lives.

Let us think a little more about globalization and digitalization. Digitalization will lead to a transformative information-based society, greatly impacting social globalization. Today, we have real time access to developments in every corner of the world. This promotes mutual understanding among people but can also trigger division. Airplanes made our world smaller from the viewpoint of travel time. Likewise, the emergence of an information-based society driven by digitalization has made our world smaller.

I am sure that it has already become a common practice among you to access tremendous amounts of information every day. Given the amount of information available in excess of our capacities to process information, the times we live in are often critically described to be overloaded with information. On the other hand, we can select the information that we need, so we can also say that the more information to choose from, the better. Nevertheless, we must choose the right information. Not only do we have to make the right judgment of the information provided, judging true from false and right from wrong, we must be responsible for “what” we derive from the information. When individuals and society are driven by false information, we will end up spinning our wheels. The energy wasted will lead to the most unproductive and futile social activities in history.

Studying at university is similar to this. In times when many people have access to the same kind of information and artificial intelligence is used to select the “right” information, it has become increasingly important that in your studies, you can identify unique new findings. If everyone arrived at the same conclusions to a given social issue, only a very narrow range of options will be explored to find solutions.

Many of you starting your undergraduate studies today became high school students in the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those of you starting your graduate studies may have prepared for graduate studies in an unexpected university life. I would like to express my respect to those of you here today, for not giving in to the various challenges faced and successfully achieving your goals. I am sure that based on your experience, you have acquired the capacity to enhance your individuality and creatively design what you will learn at university. As I mentioned before, we live in times when many people have access to the same information. While globalization respects diversity and uniqueness, digitalization inevitably leads to uniformity. The contemporary world has two conflicting faces. In this fluctuating world, developing firm beliefs will have great significance, because this is driven by your individuality.

The Director of the Catholic Jesuit Center just introduced a passage from the **Gospel** of Mark. As represented in the old clothes and old leather bag, we must change into a new self when we learn of new value and ideas. Human growth is achieved only if we prepare ourselves constantly. I hope that you will take this opportunity to think about how to continue to be yourself, making the right choices in a information-based society.

At Sophia University, we have students from more than 90 countries around the world. We have a “Global One Campus” with all departments on one campus. We take pride in our unique environment where students with diverse backgrounds gather to encounter various academic fields other than their expertise, gaining opportunities for diversified learning, exploring various careers, and gaining various roles in society. Sophia University’s educational philosophy of “For Others. With Others” is the spiritual foundation that should be most treasured in these times of globalization and digitalization. I sincerely hope that when you filter your own information, you can rely on it in designing your studies, or in making choices or decisions. I pray that you will take advantage of the unique learning environment offered at Sophia University and grow to be Sophians who walk alongside the vulnerable, and sometimes people who you have yet to meet, and thus accomplish significant growth characterized by uniqueness.

Congratulations.

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Yoshiaki Terumichi,

President, Sophia University